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SUBJECT: TECHNICAL JUDICIAL POLICE (PTJ) LIKELY TO BE ABSORBED  
WITHIN NATIONAL POLICE (PNP)

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C) 06 Panama 2419

11. (SBU) Summary: In recent weeks, the GOP and the autonomous Attorney General have been sparring behind the scenes regarding the future of the Technical Judicial Police (PTJ), Panama's rough FBI equivalent. The most reliable current information indicates that the GOP will push to dismember the entity and transfer its investigative areas to the National Police (PNP). Apparently the AG would retain formal control over the new sub-direction within the PNP and would select its head. It remains to be seen how this would work in practice, however. End Summary.

12. (SBU) The semi-autonomous Technical Judicial Police (PTJ) is Panama's rough FBI equivalent and has traditionally seen itself caught in bureaucratic turf battles between the Executive and the autonomous Attorney General, in part owing to the manner of appointment (and potential removal) of its director. As reported in reftels, the PTJ is currently in a holding pattern following the suspension of its director, Jaime Jacome, by AG Ana Matilde Gomez. There has been vibrant press and public debate over the organization and direction of the entity, as well as the legality of the removal of Jacome. Fortunately, our excellent level of cooperation with the PTJ over the past years has remained largely unchanged in spite of continuing debate (both inside and outside of the government).

13. (SBU) In the first half of March there have been several negotiating sessions between the GOP (Office of the President and the National Security Council, or Consejo) and Gomez over the PTJ. While as recently as mid-February Gomez indicated privately to us that the PTJ would be placed squarely under her office, the Executive appears to have turned the tables. The GOP appears set to effectively dismantle the PTJ and place virtually all of its functions into a sub-direction of the National Police (PNP), an arm of the Executive. (Note: Such a move would require approval of Congress. The GOP counts on a sizeable majority in the institution. End Note.) Gomez admitted as much to the Ambassador on March 14, lamenting that she would likely only maintain a small group of forensic and medical investigators under her stewardship. We understand a sort of deal was struck that will allow the AG to exercise day-to-day control over the PNP sub-direction and pick its head.

14. (SBU) We have worked very well with Gomez, who is strongly pro-U.S. and firm in her determination to go after major criminals. Internal communication and organizational skills are not her prowess, however. Over the past months, we had worked discretely to advocate keeping the PTJ relatively intact and firmly under her direction, estimating that such a framework would best serve our law enforcement interests. While a move by the Executive to place most of the PTJ under the PNP would not necessarily be problematic for our law enforcement interests, it remains to be seen whether the Executive will adopt a structure that maintains much needed checks

and balances on the Executive Branch. Our message will continue to focus on the importance of investigative and prosecutorial results. We will continue to follow the issue closely and report any additional developments.

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